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ABSTRACT

Part of the Virginia Beach year-round school program evaluation, this final report contains a detailed analysis of parental attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. The data leads to the following conclusions: a majority (53.3 percent) of parents are dubious or negative toward the 45-15 pilot project; a slight majority of parents in the pilot schools (50.2 percent) feel that the project should be continued in the pilot schools; a similar majority feel that the pilot project should be expanded; only 39.1 percent feel that the 45-15 pilot program should be expanded to junior and senior high schools; and factors associated with negativism are those of family inconvenience and multiage grading. (Author/DW)

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PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD
THE VIRGINIA BEACH
YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL
PILOT PROJECT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
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A Report Presented To
THE VIRGINIA BEACH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
by
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ABSTRACT

This is the final report on two surveys of parent attitudes toward year-round school. The study was conducted as a part of the evaluation of the Virginia Beach Year-Round School Pilot Program. The body of this report contains a detailed analysis of parent responses to items designed to assess attitudes toward, beliefs about and perceptions of that program. The analysis and the data upon which it is based leads to the following conclusions:

1. Experience with the pilot program has generally been positive, but a majority of parents (53.3 percent) remained dubious about or negative toward the program.
2. A slight majority (50.2 percent) of parents in the 1974 pilot schools believed the pilot program should be continued in the pilot schools.
3. A similar majority of parents in the 1974 pilot schools (50.0 percent) believed the program should be expanded to other elementary schools.
4. Less than a majority of 1974 pilot school parents (39.1 percent) believed the 45-15 pilot program should be expanded to junior and senior high school.
5. Parents in comparable attendance districts to the pilot school attendance districts who had not had experience with the program were less positive toward the program than were experienced pilot school parents. Of these non-experienced parents, 84.1 percent were negative or undecided toward the program, 26.6 percent believed the program should be continued, 24.5 percent believed the program should be expanded to other elementary schools and 19.7 percent believed the program should be expanded to junior and senior high schools. Because of sample limitations, however, these latter percentage distributions were subject to considerable error and should be considered cautiously.
6. The most significant factors associated with negativism toward the program were those of family inconvenience, (e.g., interrupted vacations, expenses for clothing and expenses for child care).
7. Multi-age grading was a factor in parent negativism, although it was impossible to determine the extent to which this factor was significant.

Introduction

This document is the final report of a study undertaken for the Virginia Beach City Schools. The study was designed to assess parental attitudes toward and beliefs about the Virginia Beach Year-Round School Pilot Program. The overall design of the research was detailed in a proposal to the Virginia Beach Schools (January 1973) and has been included in a number of official publications.¹ The data upon which this report is based were collected by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered through school building distribution. One questionnaire was delivered to each household in the pilot schools (Windsor Woods, Windsor Oaks, Plaza, and Holland elementary schools), and one parent (mother, father, or guardian) was asked to complete the form. In addition, a random sample of parents from two comparison schools (Brookwood and Lynnhaven elementary schools) was administered an equivalent questionnaire. The initial questionnaire was distributed in March of 1973. As a part of the research design parents were to be asked to complete a second questionnaire after experience with one complete cycle of the 45-15 program, i.e., after the completion of one academic year. Because different groups of students ended attendance cycles at different times, it was necessary to administer the second questionnaire at four different times (from late April 1974 to late June 1974). In 1974, another random sample of parents from the comparison schools was asked to complete an equivalent questionnaire.

In 1973, 2,008 questionnaires were distributed to pilot school parents and 204 in the comparison schools. Of these, the pilot school parents returned

¹See for example, A Research Design for Year-Round Education published by the Virginia Beach Schools, 1973.

1,962 usable questionnaires. In 1974, 2,525 questionnaires were distributed in the pilot schools and 200 were distributed in the comparison schools. Of these, the pilot school parents returned 2,456 that were usable, and the comparison school parents returned 148. In both 1973 and 1974, the rate of return in the pilot schools was very high (over 97 percent). Therefore, one may place considerable confidence in the returns of the pilot school population. In 1974, however, one of the comparison schools (Brookwood) returned only 59 usable questionnaires out of 100 that were distributed. It is not clear why the return rate was so low, but in comparing the findings in Brookwood to those in Lynnhaven (the other comparison school) there did not seem to have been a systematic bias involved. The reader is advised, however, that such a low rate of return does increase the probability of sample bias in the 1974 comparison school data and this should be considered a limitation in the study. Given the uses to which comparison school data will be put in this report, it seems unlikely that the limitation is an important one.

In the preliminary data analysis, the data were inspected to assure that there were no known population characteristics that might account for any differences that might appear in the analysis of data. The population in the pilot schools in the first and second administration of the questionnaire were similar on factors like employment, and mother's employment status (see Table 1). There does appear to be some disparity in the representation of military families in the 1974 comparison school population, and this should be kept in mind. However, there were no significant differences in the response patterns of military and non-military respondents, so this should not limit interpretations.

As a matter of interest, the data were further inspected to determine if there were any apparent differences among schools or cycles within schools on

Family Characteristic	Pilot Schools		Comparison Schools	
	1973	1974	1973	1974
Military	50.9	51.3	50.0	39.0
With mothers employed	35.3	36.6	40.5	48.1
With junior and senior high children	48.6	46.6	48.8	46.6

TABLE 1 -- Population Characteristics in 1973 and 1974

Data presented by percent in each category.

the various indicators of parent attitude, evaluation, and perception. There were no significant differences between and among the various cycles, so detailed reporting by cycles was not undertaken. There were, however, some minor differences among school buildings which might be of interest. Therefore, the data is presented in a way that facilitates comparison across attendance districts.

A Note On Limitations

Prior reports and documents presented to Virginia Beach school officials include detailed descriptions of the procedures used in this study along with some comment on necessary limitations of the study.² The reader of this report may not, however, have had occasion to read these earlier documents. Since these data are likely to become a part of the basis for policy discussions and decisions, it seems advisable to take some time to discuss here some of the more important limitations of this study. Among these are:

- (1) One of the effects of the 45-15 pilot program was to expand the number of households within attendance districts of the pilot schools. The total number of respondents in the pilot schools in 1973 was 1,962 as compared with 2,456 in 1974. The addition of new parents alone could account for most of the variance in responses between 1973 and 1974. Therefore, one should be extremely cautious in making inferences regarding the impact of the 45-15 pilot program on the attitude of individual parents.
- (2) Although data are presented from two comparison schools and this data will be used to assist in interpretation, the reader should remember that this was not a rigidly controlled experimental study. The data from the two comparison

²For example, Ibid.

schools can be useful in interpreting findings within the pilot schools, but these data should not be considered as data from a "control group". There were, indeed, many factors other than the year-round school program that might affect parent attitudes (e.g., the introduction of multi-age classes was clearly such a factor).

(3) Finally, the findings reported here have reference only to the parents of students in the four pilot schools and a sample of parents in two comparison schools. It would be unwarranted to consider the expressions of these individual parents as a representative expression of the community. Involved parents are necessarily interested parties, and by definition are a non-representative group. There were many constituencies in the Virginia Beach School district that were not taken into account in this study (e.g., older people without children in school). To have a representative sample upon which statements about community attitude could be based, a research design far different from the one presented here would need to be developed.

Survey Results: General

The results of the 1973 survey were presented to the Virginia Beach School on June 15, 1973. An earlier (and more limited) report was submitted on April 1, 1973. Both of these documents have been published by the Virginia Beach Schools. The first of these documents was entitled Extensiveness and Accuracy of Parent Information about the Virginia Beach 45-15 Program; the second was entitled A Survey of Parent Attitudes And Perceptions About the Virginia Beach 45-15 Pilot Program. For the reader who would like a more detailed report of the 1973 survey, it is recommended that the earlier reports be consulted, as most of the data in the present report will be from the results of the 1974 survey.

The Positive View

On both the 1973 and 1974 questionnaire, parents were asked to characterize their attitudes toward the 45-15 program. The precise wording of the question, along with a detailed breakdown of the parents' responses to the question, are presented in Tables 2 and 3. Substantially more parents in the 1974 pilot school population were willing to characterize their attitudes as positive than was the case with the 1973 population (31.1 percent in 1973, 46.8 percent in 1974). Of equal significance, however, is the relative stability of the proportion of parents who characterized their attitudes as negative. Though there was a slight decline (2.3 percent) in the proportion of 1974 parents indicating a negative attitude, the decline probably has little practical significance and may be attributable to minor measurement errors.

In order to give meaning to the general pattern of response indicated by the 1974 parent population, several other pieces of data need to be considered. First, 73.3 percent of the negative parents reported that during the past year they became more negative toward year-round school (see Table 4). Of the positive parents, 54.7 percent indicate that they became more positive. Thus, a substantial majority of the positive and negative parents apparently found factors in their experience with the 45-15 program that reinforced their present attitudes. This inference is confirmed by the fact that positive parents showed a distinctly different pattern of response on almost every indicator of attitude toward or perception of the 45-15 program (see for example, Tables 6-11, 11, 22).

As was indicated earlier, there is no direct basis for inferences about individual attitude changes. If, however, certain assumptions are granted, some reasonable inferences concerning attitude shifts within categories are

1973 RESPONSE

School	Positive	Negative	Undecided
(1) Brookwood	18.6	45.4	36.1
(2) Lynnhaven	21.5	43.0	35.5
(3) Holland	31.3	34.3	34.3
(4) Plaza	29.7	34.9	35.4
(5) Windsor Woods	30.0	34.1	35.9
(6) Windsor Oaks	33.2	28.8	38.0
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	31.1	33.0	35.9

TABLE 2 -- Statement to which response was given: "If you were to characterize your attitude toward the Virginia Beach 45-15 pilot program, which word most accurately reflects your attitude."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

1974 RESPONSE

School	Positive	Negative	Undecided
(1) Brookwood	16.9	33.9	49.2
(2) Lynnhaven	16.9	44.9	38.2
(3) Holland	47.2	31.7	21.0
(4) Plaza	41.1	32.8	26.2
(5) Windsor Woods	47.7	33.0	19.3
(6) Windsor Oaks	51.0	26.1	22.7
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	46.8	30.7	22.5

TABLE 3 -- Statement to which response was given: "If you were to characterize your attitude toward the Virginia Beach 45-15 pilot program, which word most accurately reflects your attitude."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	More Positive	More Negative	Unchanged
(1) Brookwood	20.3	28.8	50.8
(2) Lynnhaven	22.7	25.0	52.3
(3) Holland	38.0	26.4	35.6
(4) Plaza	34.0	31.4	34.6
(5) Windsor Woods	38.2	30.5	31.1
(6) Windsor Oaks	42.1	23.5	34.4
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	38.1	27.9	33.9
Positive Attitude	64.7	2.7	32.5
Negative Attitude	5.1	73.3	21.6
Undecided	28.0	17.5	54.3

TABLE 4 -- Statement to which response was given: "Over the past year has your attitude toward year around school become more positive, more negative or unchanged?"

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

possible. To make these inferences, it is necessary to assume that (1) the 1974 population is directly comparable to the 1973 population (e.g., that the introduction of transfer households did not introduce a systematic bias); (2) the most significant factor in shaping parent attitudes toward 45-15 was parent experience with the pilot program. If these assumptions are granted, the data available from the 1973 and 1974 surveys can reasonably be interpreted to indicate that experience with the 45-15 program has had a generally positive impact on parents' attitudes toward the program itself. The bases for this interpretation are:

(1) Approximately the same proportion of those who express their attitudes as positive, negative, and undecided reported that they did recall completing the questionnaire, 45.1 percent indicate that their attitude was positive, 33 percent indicated that they were negative, and 21.9 percent indicate that they were undecided. This conforms very closely to the configuration of response of all the respondents in the 1974 population (see Table 3). Thus, it seems unlikely that the introduction of new parents into the pilot school attendance district created a systematic bias in regard to expressed attitude. Furthermore, if one examines the general characteristics of the populations in the 1973 survey and the 1974 survey (see Table 1), there is additional reason to believe that the populations are comparable.

(2) The response of the parents in the comparison schools was generally less positive and more negative than in the pilot schools in both the 1973 and 1974 surveys. It would seem, therefore, that parents who did not have experience with 45-15 were more negative and tended to remain more negative toward the idea of year-round schools than pilot school parents. Indeed, testimony from school officials and observations by the investigator suggest no important differences between the comparison schools and the pilot schools other than the fact that the comparison school parents have not had experience with the

School	Yes	No	Do not recall
(1) Brookwood	15.3	67.8	16.9
(2) Lynnhaven	18.0	65.2	16.9
(3) Holland	48.2	42.7	9.1
(4) Plaza	57.3	29.2	13.5
(5) Windsor Woods	62.2	28.1	9.6
(6) Windsor Oaks	37.2	48.1	14.7
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	50.9	37.2	11.8
Positive Attitude	49.0	37.4	13.2
Negative Attitude	54.6	36.1	9.2
Undecided	49.8	38.4	11.8

TABLE 5 -- Statement to which response was given: "Did you complete a questionnaire similar to this one last year?"

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

45-15 program, nor were they as systematically informed about this program prior to March of 1973.

(3) Though the indications are not always strong, there is reason to believe that those pilot school parents who were undecided and those who were negative in the 1974 population were less extreme in their evaluations and assessments than was the case in 1973. For example, in 1973, 65.6 percent of the negative parents indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement that: "The 45-15 program will cause too much disruption to routines of family and community life to justify the pilot program." In 1974 the percent of negative parents who strongly agreed with a similar statement was 53.1 percent (see Table 6). Similarly, in 1973, 74 percent of the negative parents strongly disagreed with the statement that: "The 45-15 program will have little significant impact on lives of parents or students." In 1974, in response to a similar statement, 61.7 percent of negative parents indicated strong disagreement (see Table 7). Perhaps more convincing is the fact that in 1974, 28 percent of the undecided pilot school parents indicated they had become more positive toward the program, as compared with 17.8 percent of the undecided pilot school parents reported becoming more negative. Indeed, 38.1 percent of the total population (positive, negative, and undecided parents) indicated that they had become more positive toward the idea of year-round school - in contrast to 27.9 percent who indicated they were more negative.

The Negative View

Though the 45-15 experience seems to have had a generally positive impact on attitudes and evaluations of many parents, the fact remained that fewer than 50 percent of the parents in the 1974 pilot school population reported being positive toward the 45-15 program. There remains a considerable proportion

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	23.6	21.8	27.3	14.5	12.7
(2) Lynnhaven	25.8	24.7	32.6	11.2	5.6
(3) Holland	18.8	18.0	10.6	21.9	30.7
(4) Plaza	19.1	18.0	11.7	26.7	24.4
(5) Windsor Woods	20.8	14.6	8.6	26.8	29.1
(6) Windsor Oaks	13.1	19.7	10.6	28.5	28.2
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	17.8	17.7	10.4	26.2	27.9
Positive Attitude	1.2	6.1	4.4	34.6	53.7
Negative Attitude	53.1	29.6	7.7	6.6	3.1
Undecided	3.7	25.6	26.7	35.4	8.6

TABLE 6 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The 45-15 program has caused too much disruption to
 routines of family and community life to justify continuation
 of the program."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	3.7	14.8	31.5	14.8	35.2
(2) Lynnhaven	8.2	17.6	35.3	20.0	18.8
(3) holland	9.8	21.2	10.9	26.7	31.4
(4) Plaza	9.5	22.0	13.0	28.2	27.2
(5) Windsor Woods	8.6	22.9	13.6	24.2	30.8
(6) Windsor Oaks	10.1	28.6	11.6	25.9	23.9
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	9.5	23.9	12.3	26.3	28.1
Positive Attitude	14.7	33.8	14.7	25.6	11.3
Negative Attitude	4.6	7.1	5.4	21.1	61.7
Undecided	5.4	26.3	16.5	34.7	16.9

TABLE 7 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The 45-15 program has had little significant impact on
 the lives of parents or students."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

(22.5 percent) of the parents who were generally ambivalent about the program, and nearly a third of the parent population who were firmly negative toward the program. Though there may be reason to hope that more of the undecided parents will become positive toward the program as they gain experience with it, those parents who opposed the 45-15 program appear more firm in their stance than those who favored the program.

(1) Those who were opposed to the 45-15 program more frequently made unsolicited - and negative - remarks than did those who were positive toward the program.

(See the following section for a more detailed discussion of this point.)

(2) Some of the parents who favored or were positive about the 45-15 program were in favor of it as a "necessary evil" rather than a positive good. A number of parents indicated in their responses to the questionnaire that they wished year-round school were not necessary, but accepted it as the best alternative available. Since no questions were asked that directly bore on this issue, it is not, however, possible to estimate the strength of this sentiment.

(3) Many more negative parents than positive parents feel that the 45-15 program directly interfered with their family routines, disrupted budgets, and generally worked personal hardships (see Tables 8, 9, 10 and 11). One should not infer that these factors (e.g., disrupted family vacations) caused negative evaluations on the 45-15 program, but such factors were associated with negative evaluations. It was this association that supported and gave substance to a generally negative posture toward the year-round program.

Positive and Negative Features of 45-15

In later sections of this report, quantifiable and relatively objective data concerning parent responses to the 45-15 pilot project will be presented.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	32.1	32.1	22.6	5.7	7.5
(2) Lynnhaven	31.8	48.2	16.5	2.4	1.2
(3) Holland	29.2	43.0	5.0	11.7	11.0
(4) Plaza	29.4	45.0	4.5	9.4	11.8
(5) Windsor Woods	31.9	40.0	2.8	14.8	10.6
(6) Windsor Oaks	23.7	44.9	4.9	15.7	10.7
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	28.4	43.3	4.3	12.9	11.0
Positive Attitude	7.4	47.4	5.3	21.3	18.6
Negative Attitude	65.9	27.3	0.7	2.2	4.0
Undecided	20.7	57.3	7.1	10.1	4.9

TABLE 8 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The 45-15 program has caused some disruptions in family routine."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	33.9	19.6	18.6	8.9	8.9
(2) Lynnhaven	40.0	24.7	18.8	8.2	8.2
(3) Holland	22.0	21.1	25.4	15.8	15.6
(4) Plaza	26.2	27.0	22.5	14.7	9.6
(5) Windsor Woods	24.1	21.1	28.1	14.6	12.1
(6) Windsor Oaks	23.4	22.8	24.6	17.4	11.7
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	24.0	23.1	25.1	15.7	12.1
Positive Attitude	7.2	19.8	29.2	23.5	20.4
Negative Attitude	52.7	20.7	18.8	4.2	3.5
Undecided	19.6	33.6	24.9	15.3	6.6

TABLE 9 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The 45-15 pilot program creates unacceptable hardships
 for working mothers."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

Pilot Schools	Yes	No
Holland	29.9	70.1
Plaza	32.2	67.8
Windsor Woods	31.2	68.8
Windsor Oaks	25.7	74.3
All Pilot Schools	29.6	70.4
Positive Attitude	12.4	87.6
Negative Attitude	56.3	43.7
Undecided	29.3	70.7

TABLE 10 -- Statement to which response was given: "Has the 45-15 pilot program caused a significant change in your household budget for items such as babysitting, clothing, food and spending."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	A Great Deal	Somewhat	Not at all
Holland	26.4	35.4	38.2
Plaza	27.3	40.4	32.3
Windsor Woods	27.2	36.4	36.4
Windsor Oaks	22.6	39.9	37.5
All Pilot Schools	25.7	38.2	36.1
Positive Attitude	8.1	34.8	57.1
Negative Attitude	57.3	33.8	8.8
Undecided	19.0	51.3	29.5

TABLE 11 -- Statement to which response was given: "How has the 45-15 pilot program affected your family vacation?"

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

But quantifiable data are often without the passion and feeling that one gains from more subjective sources. Therefore, in the 1974 questionnaire parents were asked to comment on positive and negative features of the program. The investigator personally read 75 percent of these responses and assistants read the remainder. It was our intention to gain an impression of those features of the program about which parents felt most strongly. The following are our impressions:

- (1) The open ended responses left the distinct impression that those who were positive toward the program felt much less intensely about their position than did those who were negative, and that the issue of year-round school remained controversial in the pilot schools.
- (2) The most frequently mentioned positive feature of the 45-15 pilot program was that children liked school better. This response was often tied with a discussion of the parents' perception that shorter vacations resulted in children forgetting less. Such responses were usually from parents who were positive toward the program, but there were isolated incidents of negative parents reporting similar perceptions. Another positive feature had to do with the flexibility of family vacations. Some parents (usually those who were positive) reported feeling that their children were getting more individual attention than before the 45-15 program was instituted.
- (3) On the negative side, both positive and negative parents reported feeling that maintaining the traditional dress code in the 45-15 schools caused undue hardships. Some working mothers took occasion to discuss their particular situations, and pointed to various problems they were having (e.g., locating baby sitters, adjusting budgets and buying clothing). As might have been predicted, many parents objected to the disruption of summer vacations - as they did the general disruption of family routines. One of the most frequently

mentioned negative features was the multi-age classroom and the "overcrowdedness" this implied to some parents. Indeed, a few parents suggested that they had been betrayed. They suggested that the pilot program was theoretically designed to relieve overcrowding - but that had not been the result. And, it is not without interest that among the more frequently voiced criticisms by negative parents was the feeling that schedules were disjointed and children learned less - almost the direct opposite of some of the positive comments.

General Evaluations of School Life

In 1973 and 1974, parents were asked a number of questions designed to elicit from them some indication of their evaluations of the Virginia Beach schools. In 1973, 76.5 percent of all parents in the pilot schools evaluated the schools their children were attending as good or excellent, and 83.4 percent of the parents in the comparison schools evaluated the schools as good or excellent. In 1974, 74.9 percent of the comparison school parents, as compared to 74.0 percent in the pilot schools, rated the schools their children were attending as good or excellent (see Table 12)³.

As was indicated in the 1973 report, given the generally high appraisal of the Virginia Beach schools that existed in 1973, one would not expect the 45-15 program to significantly improve this evaluation. The best that could be hoped for was that there would be no serious erosion of parental evaluation. The 45-15 program has not altered parents' evaluation of educational programs in the Virginia Beach schools, and parent evaluations of Virginia Beach schools remained consistently quite positive. Of course, this judgment must be tempered

³ The fact that there was an apparent drop in comparison school parents' evaluation should be treated cautiously, as the low return rate from one of these comparison schools makes systematic bias possible. Put simply, it is not recommended that much confidence be placed in the representativeness of the 1974 comparison school response. One can, however, have considerable confidence in the responses of the pilot school population, for in both 1973 and 1974 the return rate was high.

School	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsatisfactory
(1) Brookwood	27.1	42.4	22.0	5.1	3.4
(2) Lynnhaven	27.1	51.8	17.6	2.4	1.2
(3) Holland	17.6	55.1	20.0	3.9	3.4
(4) Plaza	15.3	50.9	25.6	4.7	3.3
(5) Windsor Woods	23.6	52.9	18.3	2.3	3.0
(6) Windsor Oaks	22.4	57.5	15.7	3.0	1.3
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	19.8	54.2	19.9	3.5	2.7
Positive Attitude	29.1	58.0	10.2	1.6	1.0
Negative Attitude	8.6	46.3	22.4	6.5	6.3
Undecided	15.5	56.7	23.1	3.4	1.3

TABLE 12 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "In general, how would you evaluate the educational programs
 in the Virginia Beach schools your children now attend."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

with a number of caveats.

In 1974, pilot school parents were much less certain that school officials would "stick with their word" and abandon the pilot program if evaluations were negative than was the case in 1973. In response to the statement: "The pilot 45-15 program will probably be continued even if the evaluations of the program are negative", 30.4 percent of the 1973 pilot school parents indicated mild or strong agreement. In 1974, 56.3 percent of the pilot school parents indicated mild or strong agreement (see Table 13). Thus, in 1974, over half of the pilot school parents seemed to feel that objective evaluation was going to be a less significant factor than might have been suggested in public statements.

Perhaps more central to evaluation of the school, however, are parents' perceptions of their children's reaction to year-round school. In the 1973 population 41.1 percent of all pilot school parents agreed that children would like school as much under the 45-15 program as under the traditional calendar. Similarly, 64.4 percent agreed that children would learn as much under the 45-15 program as under the traditional calendar. In 1974, 61.8 percent of the pilot school parents reported that children like school as much under the 45-15 program as under the traditional calendar (see Table 14); 63.1 percent indicated that they believed children do, in fact, learn as much under the 45-15 plan (see Table 15). Equally important, however, is the fact that fewer than 30 percent of the parents were in disagreement with the idea that children liked school as much under the 45-15 plan, and fewer than 20 percent of the parents indicated that they thought children did not learn as much. Furthermore, in the latter two categories, the overwhelming majority were those parents whose attitudes toward the 45-15 program was characterized as negative.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	25.5	14.5	41.8	10.9	7.3
(2) Lynnhaven	29.9	24.1	32.2	5.7	8.0
(3) Holland	32.1	19.5	25.6	11.7	11.1
(4) Plaza	34.2	27.8	20.5	9.0	8.4
(5) Windsor Woods	25.1	19.6	12.8	8.7	0.2
(6) Windsor Oaks	23.7	29.5	24.2	13.7	8.9
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	30.7	25.8	22.5	11.8	9.3
Positive Attitude	23.9	24.9	24.5	15.4	11.4
Negative Attitude	45.2	23.3	17.5	5.8	8.2
Undecided	24.5	31.1	25.1	12.8	6.4

TABLE 13 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The pilot 45-15 program will probably be continued,
 even if the evaluations of the program are negative."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	10.9	16.4	49.1	9.1	14.5
(2) Lynnhaven	16.5	17.6	30.6	14.1	21.2
(3) Holland	34.8	25.7	10.8	10.6	18.2
(4) Plaza	32.5	25.4	10.1	12.2	19.8
(5) Windsor Woods	36.0	24.9	9.3	9.3	20.5
(6) Windsor Oaks	37.5	29.9	10.4	11.4	10.8
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	35.2	26.6	10.2	10.9	17.0
Positive Attitude	59.4	28.4	6.3	3.7	2.3
Negative Attitude	7.3	16.7	11.9	18.6	45.5
Undecided	22.7	36.5	15.7	15.7	9.4

TABLE 14 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "Children like school as much under the 45-15 plan as under
 the traditional calendar."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	32.1	12.5	46.4	5.4	3.6
(2) Lynnhaven	22.5	19.1	41.6	7.9	9.0
(3) Holland	43.9	20.9	14.0	8.2	13.0
(4) Plaza	37.9	19.4	18.3	7.0	17.4
(5) Windsor Woods	45.1	20.1	14.8	7.1	12.9
(6) Windsor Oaks	45.0	20.5	17.6	5.5	11.4
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	42.9	20.2	16.3	6.9	13.7
Positive Attitude	69.4	17.2	8.4	1.8	3.2
Negative Attitude	12.7	18.4	20.5	13.4	35.0
Undecided	28.8	29.2	27.1	8.6	6.4

TABLE 15 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "Children learn as much under the 45-15 plan as under
 the traditional calendar."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

One tangential bit of data that might be of interest is a comparison of reported attendance at PTA meetings (see Table 16). In 1973, 40.8 percent of the pilot school parents indicated that they regularly attended PTA meetings. This figure dropped to 29.2 percent in 1974. Though this is not a direct evaluation of the school or school programs, it does suggest that direct parent involvement in school activities via the PTA was probably less during the pilot program than prior to it.

Impact on Families

In general, there were few surprises in the findings related to the impact of the 45-15 program on family patterns. Thirty-six percent indicated that their family vacation was not at all affected by the 45-15 program, and 25.7 percent indicated that the 45-15 program had a considerable impact on their family vacations (see Table 11). In general, perceived impact on family vacations was highly related to attitude - as were factors like impact on family budgets (see Table 10). Those who were negative toward the 45-15 program saw the program as having a more significant impact on family life than did those who were positive toward the program (see Tables 8, 9, 10 and 11). Indeed, many who were positive toward the program volunteered that their view was that whatever impact the program had on family life, it was largely beneficial; whereas those who were negative more frequently saw the impact as dramatically detrimental. For example, some positive parents were pleased with the flexibility that the program provided in terms of vacation schedules. More parents, however, felt that the 45-15 program interfered with traditional family vacations to an extent that was unwarranted.

Perhaps the most clear-cut division between those who were positive and those who were negative toward the 45-15 program can be seen in the response to the

School	Yes	No
(1) Brookwood	24.6	75.4
(2) Lynnhaven	53.4	46.6
(3) Holland	30.7	69.4
(4) Plaza	31.9	68.1
(5) Windsor Woods	31.7	68.4
(6) Windsor Oaks	23.4	76.7
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	29.2	70.8
Positive Attitude	28.8	71.2
Negative Attitude	31.8	68.1
Undecided	26.6	73.4

TABLE 16 -- Statement to which response was given: "Do you routinely attend PTA meetings?"

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

statement: "The 45-15 program has caused too much disruption to routines of family and community life to justify continuation of the program." Fifty-three and one tenth percent of those who expressed negative attitudes strongly agree with this statement and 53.7 percent of those expressing positive attitudes strongly disagree (see Table 6). It is in the area of impact on family life that those who were negative toward the 45-15 program selected the most extreme responses, i.e., strongly agree or strongly disagree. It cannot be denied that year-round school does cause, for at least some parents, major disruptions in family routine. Some families seemed able and/or willing to accommodate themselves to these new patterns; whereas other families found the 45-15 program an unwarranted incursion upon the traditional values of the home. In one of the more extreme statements, a parent wrote, "This is just one more example of how the school is attempting to destroy the American family." One need not agree with the intent or the conclusion of this statement to recognize that, for many families, experience with the 45-15 program has been a painful and traumatic undertaking. On the other hand, one cannot forget that many parents have found that year-round school created new potential for families and for children - many of which they would probably find difficult to give up now that they recognize them.

The situation of the working mother and of those with children in schools that were not on the 45-15 program is deserving of special consideration. There were no statistically significant difference in the expressed attitudes of parents from households where the mother was employed outside the home as opposed to those households in which the mother was not employed. In 1973, there was some indication that some respondents felt that mothers who were then employed might have to give up their employment because of the issue of procuring

child care services. In 1973, 35.3 percent of the mothers in pilot schools were employed (see Table 1). In 1974, the percentage of mothers employed increased slightly (36.6 percent). It is likely that in some individual cases the 45-15 program did result in mothers changing their employment patterns. But, overall, the 45-15 program seems to have had little impact on the employment of mothers.

The pilot program has, however, created some problems for mothers who maintained their employment. Many mothers reported that they found it nearly impossible to procure child care services and that they were, therefore, making less than satisfactory arrangements for their children. Though this number was not substantial (less than 5 percent of the respondents indicated that this was a particularly pressing problem), it must certainly be one source of negative reaction to the 45-15 program. Similarly, some of those parents with children in junior and senior high schools did express their concern with the inconvenience caused by mixed vacation schedules.

Continuation of the 45-15 Program?

The ultimate purpose of this report is to provide one part of a data base from which Virginia Beach school officials can make an informed judgment concerning the future of year-round school in Virginia Beach. It is not the purpose nor intent of this report to make recommendations regarding the nature of that decision. Many factors, in addition to parent attitudes, evaluations and perceptions, must be taken into consideration when making such a policy decision. Furthermore, it would be inappropriate to interject an outside agency into a decision that will have such far reaching consequences for the Virginia Beach community. It is possible, however, to report objectively parental responses to questions related to the continuation and/or expansion of the 45-15 program.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	20.4	11.1	35.2	7.4	25.9
(2) Lynnhaven	14.1	9.4	40.0	4.7	31.8
(3) Holland	40.8	12.2	18.6	5.8	22.6
(4) Plaza	31.1	13.6	23.5	4.9	26.8
(5) Windsor Woods	34.9	15.2	19.4	4.5	26.0
(6) Windsor Oaks	35.4	17.6	23.3	5.4	18.2
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	35.4	14.8	21.4	5.2	23.3
Positive Attitude	69.4	20.8	7.3	0.9	1.6
Negative Attitude	2.6	3.8	13.4	11.7	68.5
Undecided	8.6	17.1	62.4	5.3	6.6

TABLE 17 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The 45-15 program should be continued."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

In response to the direct statement: "The 45-15 program should be continued", 50.2 percent of the 1974 pilot school parents agreed with the statement, 21.4 percent were undecided, and 28.5 percent disagreed (see Table 17). If, however, one excludes those who were negative toward the program, 69.5 percent of those who were positive and undecided favored continuation of the program. Similarly, if one excludes those who were positive toward the program, then 51.4 percent of the population disagreed with the proposition that the program should be continued. Given the fact that those who were positive toward the program constitute a significant plurality of the total population - 46.8 percent of all 1974 pilot school parents - there does seem to be more parental support for continuation of the program than for discontinuation, but the support is by no means a mandate. If, however, the issue becomes one of expanding the program to other elementary schools or to junior and senior high school, there are some additional factors that need to be considered.

(1) If one can assume that the comparison school population and the pilot school population in the 1973 survey were comparable - it is clear that from the outset more parents in the pilot school districts were positive toward the 45-15 program than was the case in the comparison schools: 31.1 percent positive in the pilot schools, and 20.1 percent in the comparison schools (see Table 2). Though there is reason to have less confidence in the comparison school data in the 1974 survey than in the 1973 survey, it still seems likely that there remains a significant differential between the proportion of the parent population that is positive toward the 45-15 program within the comparison schools and the pilot schools. Specifically, the data from Brookwood and Lynnhaven indicated that 16.9 percent of the 1974 parent population would characterize their attitude toward the 45-15 program as positive - as contrasted

with the 46.8 percent positive characterization by the 1974 pilot school parents (see Table 3). Thus, to introduce 45-15 into schools like those represented by Lynnhaven and Brookwood, it would be necessary to confront a situation which appears to be considerably less positive and probably more negative than was the situation in the pilot schools in March, 1973.

(2) Even after a year of experience with the program, a slim majority of the pilot school parents (50.9 percent) believed that the program should be expanded to other elementary schools (see Table 18). Furthermore, within the comparison schools, the 1974 parent response indicated that 24.5 percent believed that the program should be expanded to other elementary schools. Thus, within the surveyed parent populations, there does not seem to be strong support for expansion of the program.

(3) Even in the comparison schools there were apparently a considerable number of people who were undecided concerning their attitude toward the 45-15 program - 35.8 percent in 1973 and 40.6 percent in 1974. It seems likely that these conditions were no less favorable to the introduction of the 45-15 program than was the case in the pilot schools in the autumn of 1972.

What these data suggest is that if the decision is taken to expand the 45-15 program to other schools, careful thought will need to be given to matters of public information and the development of positive parent commitment. There was no overwhelming positive sentiment for the 45-15 concept - even in the pilot schools - but it does appear that experience with the program may have resulted in more positive evaluations.

The issue of expansion to junior and senior high schools is even less clear. The inconvenience of having children in the 45-15 program while at the same time having children in junior and senior high schools on different schedules

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	21.8	9.1	34.5	5.5	29.1
(2) Lynnhaven	10.2	10.2	44.3	6.8	28.4
(3) holland	37.3	13.2	22.6	5.4	21.5
(4) Plaza	33.2	14.1	22.6	4.1	26.0
(5) Windsor Woods	38.4	13.4	21.3	4.9	21.9
(6) Windsor Oaks	36.0	17.9	25.0	4.5	16.6
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	36.1	14.8	23.0	4.7	21.4
Positive Attitude	64.0	21.2	12.7	0.5	1.5
Negative Attitude	6.5	3.4	16.2	10.7	63.3
Undecided	18.5	17.2	53.7	5.2	5.4

TABLE 18 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The 45-15 program should be expanded to other elementary schools."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

is quite apparent. Many parents reported that the inconvenience of having children on two different vacation schedules was a major negative factor in the program. That this belief was probably widespread is given some support by the strong association between expressed attitude toward the pilot program and the presence of junior and senior high students in the home (see Table 19). For example, 54.9 percent of those parents with no junior high or high school children in their homes characterized their attitudes toward the program as positive, whereas only 37.5 percent of those parents with junior high or high school children were willing to so characterize their attitudes. This suggests that the inconvenience of having children on different schedules was a significant factor in developing or supporting negativism toward the program. But this should not be taken as evidence that the parents want the program expanded to junior and senior high schools. Indeed, parents were even less supportive of the idea of expanding year-round school to junior and senior high schools than they were of the continuation of the program at the elementary level. Only 39.1 percent of the pilot school parents agreed with the proposition that the program should be expanded to junior and senior high schools (see Table 20). In the comparison schools, support for the idea was even less substantial (19.7 percent agreed with the statement).

Concluding Observations

A General View

Year-round school necessarily interrupts the routines of many families. For some parents these interruptions border on the intolerable. Many parents who were negative toward the Virginia Beach program will undoubtedly be extremely upset and vocal should school officials decide to continue or expand

Attitude toward Virginia Beach 45-15 Pilot Program			
Parents:	Positive	Negative	Undecided
Having no children in junior/senior high school	54.9	23.6	21.3
Having from one to five children in junior/ senior high school	37.5	38.9	23.6

TABLE 19 -- Attitude Toward Virginia Beach 45-15 Pilot Program

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	22.2	5.6	33.3	7.4	31.5
(2) Lynnhaven	10.2	4.5	38.6	3.4	43.2
(3) Holland	29.8	11.2	21.3	5.4	32.2
(4) Plaza	23.4	8.9	22.5	6.3	38.9
(5) Windsor Woods	28.7	12.5	18.0	7.1	33.7
(6) Windsor Oaks	29.4	13.0	24.1	7.5	26.1
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	27.7	11.4	21.6	6.6	32.4
Positive Attitude	49.1	16.4	18.8	4.8	11.0
Negative Attitude	5.8	3.2	10.5	8.1	72.3
Undecided	13.4	11.9	42.8	8.4	23.5

TABLE 20 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The 45-15 program should be expanded to junior and
 senior high schools."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

the program. Similarly, parents who have had experience with the program and have come to feel positively about the program and its benefits will likely be distressed if the program is discontinued. In brief, in the four pilot schools the continuation or discontinuation of year-round school will cause controversy. In the comparison schools there did not seem to be the positive sentiment toward year-round school that existed in the pilot schools. Therefore, a decision not to continue or expand the program will probably be less controversial among comparison school parents than among the experienced pilot school parents.

If the effect on parent attitudes is taken as a criterion, the Virginia Beach effort to implement year-round school must be judged a success. To expect that a program that so clearly interrupts community patterns and family customs would be enthusiastically embraced by an overwhelming majority of parents is unrealistic. There are many parents who would be negative toward year-round school regardless of the specific program or how the program was implemented (see Table 45). The fact that parents who have had experience with a program of year-round education were demonstrably more positive toward the idea of year-round education and the specific program in which they were involved than were parents without such experience should not be discounted. On the other hand, one should not discount the fact that after an intensive public information effort and one full year of experience, fewer than 50 percent of the pilot school parents were willing to characterize their attitude toward the program as positive.

Parent attitudes toward year-round school contained few clear-cut guides for decision making. What these attitudes mean and what significance they should have for decision must be weighed in terms of the values one places on factors

like: (a) the perceptions of some parents that the program is detrimental to family life; (b) the perceptions of some parents that the program increases opportunities for parents and children to have varied vacations; (c) the perceptions of some parents that the pilot program has created unacceptable hardships for working mothers; and (d) the widely held belief that the program is likely not to be abandoned regardless of the evaluations that are made of the program and its effects.

If the program is continued there are clearly a number of factors that need to be considered. Among these are: (a) Is there a more effective means of coordinating the activities of various community agencies and the schools? Though these data were not reported in the text of this report, both positive and negative parents expressed concern over the difficulties they were experiencing with community activities like the summer recreation programs. Though such programs have not been eliminated (see Table 22), there was some feeling among parents that arrangements in this area were less than satisfactory. (b) Is there some means by which the child care situation for working mothers can be more systematically addressed? Though the data we have does not provide definitive descriptions of the perceptions of parents concerning this issue, it is clear that there were many who felt the situation of working mothers has yet to be effectively managed (47.1 percent of pilot school parents agreed with the proposition that the pilot program created unacceptable hardships for working mothers). (c) Finally, is the application of a uniform dress code really consistent with the idea of year-round school, or is it simply an unnecessary inconvenience for parents? Some parents, including some who were positive toward the program, felt very strongly that current dress policies in the pilot schools were unacceptable.

Conclusions

At the outset of this report the general conclusions of this study were reported. It seems well to end this report with a restatement of those conclusions. They are:

1. Experience with the pilot program has generally been positive, but a majority of parents (53.3 percent) remained dubious about or negative toward the program.
2. A slight majority (50.2 percent) of parents in the 1974 pilot schools believed the pilot program should be continued in the pilot schools.
3. A similar majority of parents in the 1974 pilot schools (50.9 percent) believed the program should be expanded to other elementary schools.
4. Less than a majority of the 1974 pilot school parents (39.1 percent) believed the 45-15 pilot program should be expanded to junior and senior high schools.
5. Parents in comparable attendance districts to the pilot school attendance districts who have not had experience with the program were less positive toward the program than were experienced pilot school parents. Of these parents, 84.1 percent were negative or undecided toward the program, 26.6 percent believed the program should be continued, 24.5 percent believed the program should be expanded to other elementary schools and 19.7 percent believed the program should be expanded to junior and senior high schools. Because of sample limitations, however, these latter percentage distributions were subject to considerable error and should be considered cautiously.
6. The most significant factors associated with negativism toward the program were those of family inconvenience (e.g., interrupted vacations, expenses for clothing and expenses for child care).
7. Multi-age grading was a factor in parent negativism, although it was impossible to determine the extent to which this factor was significant.

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL TABLES OF INTEREST

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	24.1	14.8	35.2	11.1	14.8
(2) Lynnhaven	18.6	19.8	36.0	12.8	12.8
(3) Holland	25.3	24.0	17.3	14.1	19.3
(4) Plaza	18.8	26.5	20.6	13.6	20.4
(5) Windsor Woods	21.1	27.1	18.6	11.0	22.3
(6) Windsor Oaks	22.7	28.9	18.4	15.4	14.6
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	21.9	26.7	18.8	13.6	19.0
Positive Attitude	37.9	35.4	14.9	6.7	5.0
Negative Attitude	6.7	9.4	13.9	20.2	49.9
Undecided	9.3	32.4	33.6	18.8	5.9

TABLE 21 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The potential of the 45-15 program justifies the inconveniences it may cause to parents or children."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	29.1	30.9	27.3	5.5	7.3
(2) Lynnhaven	22.1	17.4	46.5	9.3	4.7
(3) holland	42.9	22.7	16.7	9.9	7.9
(4) Plaza	32.7	29.0	17.1	12.1	9.1
(5) Windsor Woods	37.7	27.2	15.6	11.0	8.5
(6) Windsor Oaks	36.4	28.4	15.4	11.7	8.1
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	37.2	27.0	16.2	11.2	8.4
Positive Attitude	55.5	25.1	10.9	5.6	2.8
Negative Attitude	17.0	25.4	20.2	17.0	20.4
Undecided	26.1	33.2	21.6	15.4	3.8

TABLE 22 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "The 45-15 plan has not eliminated traditional community
 activities like little league, recreation and Boy Scouts."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	53.7	11.1	13.0	9.3	13.0
(2) Lynnhaven	52.9	14.1	10.6	11.8	10.6
(3) holland	35.8	14.4	13.1	13.4	23.3
(4) Plaza	40.3	13.5	14.3	12.3	19.6
(5) Windsor Woods	33.6	12.6	15.8	15.1	22.9
(6) Windsor Oaks	29.6	17.0	20.2	13.4	19.9
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	34.7	14.5	16.0	13.5	21.3
Positive Attitude	12.8	15.5	17.3	19.4	35.0
Negative Attitude	71.4	9.2	9.1	4.6	6.1
Undecided	11.0	19.5	22.7	13.3	13.5

TABLE 23 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "Parents should be permitted to decide whether or not
 their children will participate in the 45-15 pilot program."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Undecided	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
(1) Brookwood	11.8	2.0	68.6	5.9	11.8
(2) Lynnhaven	7.1	9.4	62.4	5.9	15.3
(3) Holland	9.4	9.4	62.6	8.2	10.3
(4) Plaza	6.8	11.2	63.4	6.1	12.6
(5) Windsor Woods	10.2	9.9	63.9	5.6	10.4
(6) Windsor Oaks	8.6	12.0	63.4	6.5	9.6
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	8.7	10.7	63.4	6.6	10.6
Positive Attitude	15.1	14.3	64.3	3.4	2.9
Negative Attitude	2.4	5.7	57.1	10.3	24.6
Undecided	4.1	10.2	70.3	7.9	7.5

TABLE 24 -- Statement to which response was given:
 "School officials have developed satisfactory solutions
 to the problems this pilot program creates for the
 transfer of military dependents."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.

School	Positive	Negative	Undecided
(1) Brookwood	20.3	30.5	49.2
(2) Lynnhaven	22.5	41.6	36.0
(3) Holland	47.7	28.9	23.2
(4) Plaza	44.4	29.6	26.0
(5) Windsor Woods	46.1	32.1	21.8
(6) Windsor Oaks	50.4	23.4	25.6
All Pilot Schools (3, 4, 5, & 6)	47.2	28.3	24.6
Positive Attitude	92.7	2.2	5.2
Negative Attitude	6.8	85.1	8.0
Undecided	7.6	5.0	87.4

TABLE 25 -- Statement to which response was given: "If you were to characterize your attitude toward the general idea of year around school, which word most accurately reflects your attitude."

Data presented by percent responding in each category.